



PLANNING BOARD

~ 2003 REPORT ~

The Milford Planning Board had a busy and challenging year, as it continued to serve the community in its role of implementing the goals and recommendations of the **1999 Master Plan Update** and in reviewing, analyzing, and determining the approval of various subdivision and site plan applications.

Most of the subdivision activity during 2003 involved minor applications (two or three lots) or lot line adjustments. One large residential project, the 37-lot Patch Hill development, received its final approvals in the fall. With the utilization of open space subdivision requirements, each new subdivision or residential project of 5 or more units or lots, must set aside at least 30% of the subdivision area as permanently protected open space. The minimum open space area requirement can not include wetlands or slopes steeper than 25% grade, with the intent that new open space areas are accessible to the public or homeowner's associations, protect sensitive environmental resources, tie in with existing open space lands, and in general help preserve the rural character of the Town. In an open space subdivision, there are no more lots allowed than in a typical, sprawling, conventional subdivision (the number of lots are determined by the zoning district restrictions and physical land constraints), but a landowner or developer is afforded flexibility in lot size and frontage requirements as a trade-off for the required open space. With standard or conventional subdivisions, entire tract areas are carved into individual lots, and valuable open space areas become subject to possible misuse and degradation from individual property owners. Open space subdivisions, if properly designed, provide a less sprawling land and resource-consuming development.

The Planning Board has on the 2004 Warrant minor modifications to the Open Space and Conservation Zoning regulations that make for a better, easier to understand regulation for both the Board and landowners.

Several new commercial projects received site plan approval, including a new veterinary clinic on Elm Street, a new car-wash facility on Jones Road across from Market Basket, new commercial/industrial rental units on Old Wilton and Perry Roads, and a new boat sales and storage business at the corner of Westchester Drive and Elm Street. Additionally, The Mill elderly housing complex on Bridge Street received approval for 25 additional elderly apartments, which will be built in conjunction with a hoped-for Community Development Block Grant that will provide added sidewalk, lighting, and streetscape improvements in this corner of downtown.

The Planning Board continues to work on long-range planning efforts, such as subdivision and site plan regulation changes that will provide ways to manage Milford's continued growth and help preserve and protect community character. This will include transportation planning, sign regulation modifications, design standards, stormwater management, and economic development. All work will need to be incorporated into a comprehensive growth management strategy. Although Milford's population growth has remained consistent at about a very moderate 1.5% per year over the past 10 years, the

Board will focus on ways to balance residential growth with the cost of services. The continued reliance on residential property taxes to fund Town and school services drives public and private land use decisions, both good and bad.

The Planning Board would like to express its appreciation to the Facilities Master Plan Committee, which has picked up the ball and is running hard in developing a comprehensive facilities plan for the Town. The Board also would like to express its appreciation for the hard work and commitment of the Capital Improvements Plan Citizens' Advisory Committee and the citizen members of the Sign Code Committee. The expertise and energy of citizen volunteers is an invaluable resource for the Town.

Several changes to the Board occurred this past year. Board member Larry Anderson resigned early in the year, taking with him a common sense and practical approach to decision-making. Filling his position was ex-Selectman and past Planning Board member Dick D'Amato.

The Board wishes to extend its thanks to Walter Murray, who resigned from the Board in January 2004 after 9 + years as a regular member and chairman. Mr. Murray provided an evenhanded approach to Board meetings, and strove to look at development with common sense. His involvement in committee work and advice to staff and other boards and committees will be greatly missed.

And finally, the Board wishes to express its gratitude and extend its best wishes to Shirley Carl, who retired from Town service after over 27 years of dedicated work for the Planning Board, the Zoning Board, and town departments. Mrs. Carl's knowledge of people, places, and projects was a treasured resource that is impossible to replace.

The Planning Board is always looking for Milford citizens to participate as either full or alternate Board members. If you are interested in helping to guide the future growth and development of Milford, please attend meetings and become part of the process.